



By
BARRY PAIN
♡



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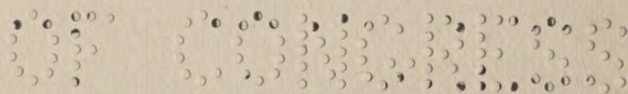
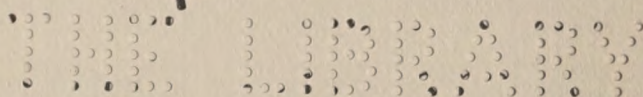
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ANOTHER ENGLISHWOMAN'S
LOVE-LETTERS

Another Englishwoman's Love-Letters

By
Barry Pain



G. P. Putnam's Sons
New York and London
The Knickerbocker Press

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Preface

THE production of *An English-woman's Love-Letters* was—if I may use the common phrase without offence—well engineered; and I happen to admire engineering most when it is confined to engines. The form and binding of the book blended the two styles which I love least—the precious and the shoddy—and smelled of ten years ago. The book's popularity had made two questions wearisome to me by their frequent importunity. I was, and still am, tired of being asked whether I think the letters are genuine; and I hope

I may be spared for the future the nauseous problem as to the precise degree of consanguinity, if any, between the separated lovers. In fact, I began to read the book with every prejudice against it, and ended by thinking it cleverly done and possessed of some charm and pathos. Yet there is the sentimentality against which the author has tried in vain to guard: the perusal gives one rather the feeling that one has been eating caramels to excess in a moonlit churchyard. Of course, if the book had not had value I should never have dreamed of having a little fun with it: servants break only valuable things. Besides, I do not look forward to a sea-green flood of sentimental literature, let loose on the public in consequence

of the success of *An Englishwoman's Love-Letters*, with any equanimity. One forgives everything to the founder of a school except the school.

And of course the publication of the fooling which follows this preface answers, so far as I am concerned, the first of those two questions, and answers it in a negative as decided as I can make it. It is difficult to imagine that anybody would have the treacherous impudicity to publish the love-letters of a woman recently dead, without even a plea of historical interest. Nothing on earth could excuse such a publication, and one would be sorry to be even in the most remote manner connected with it. Those letters are not genuine ; they con-

tain overwhelming evidence that they are art ; and I think that anyone who is in the habit of writing stories or of studying the technique of story-writing cannot fail to see this. They may have some very slight foundation in fact, for artists use models, but that is of no importance. It is worth notice that the author in the introduction makes many efforts to make readers believe that the letters are genuine, but is careful to avoid a plain statement that they are genuine.

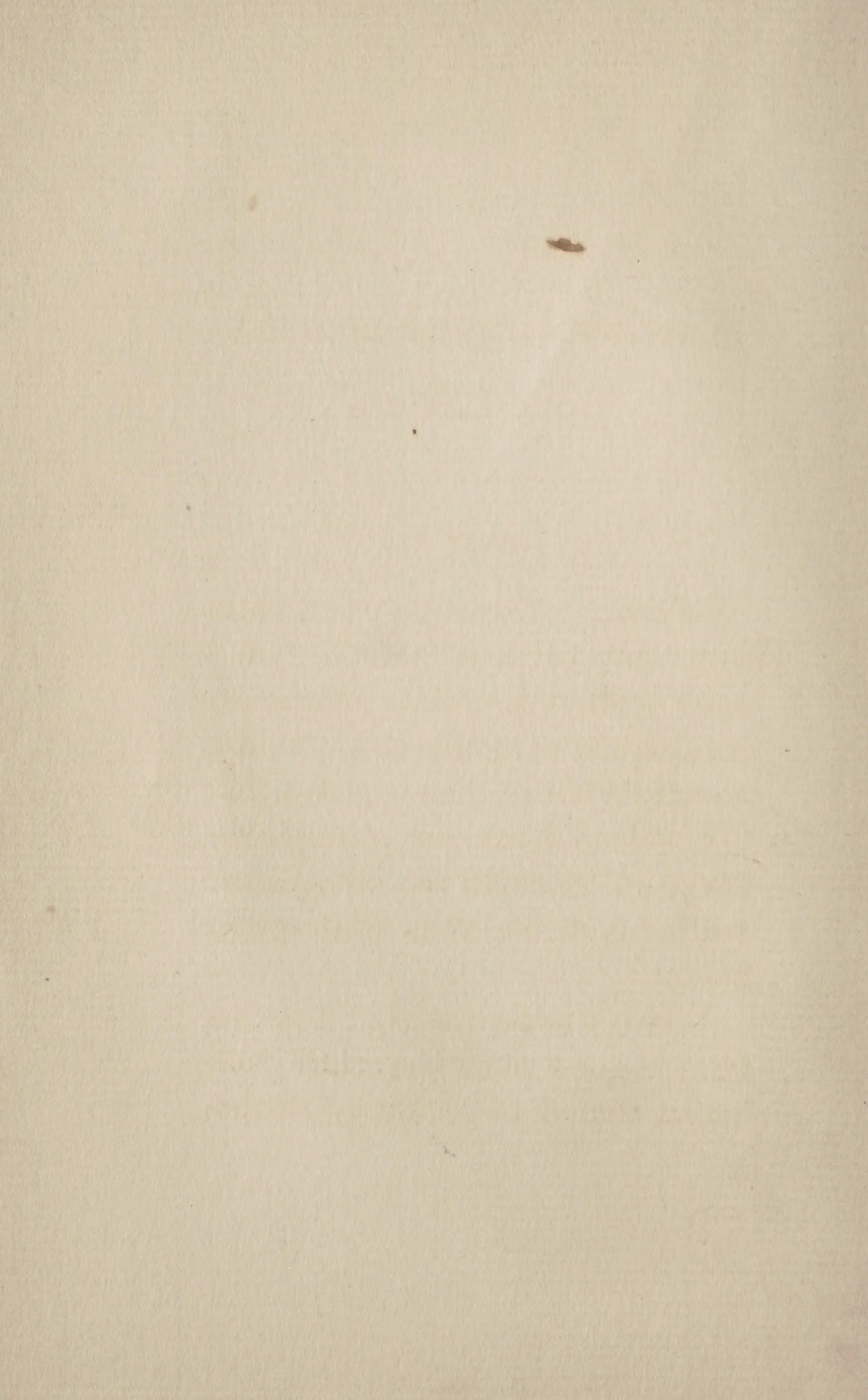
And as I have nothing further explanatory to say, I may now proceed to the explanation.

Explanation

CIRCUMSTANCES which occurred at Pontresina in the spring of last year have culminated in an absolute necessity for the publication of the following letters. In what way this has happened cannot be more clearly indicated during the life of the present Emperor of China, and no clue to the mystery will be found in the letters themselves. Those who know will keep silence ; if anyone speaks, that may be taken as evidence that he does not know. In this way I trust that the mystery may be preserved and the sale of the book stimulated.

The letters are printed exactly as they were written, with the exception of such alterations, additions, and omissions as may happen to have been made. In order to meet the requirements of the Food Adulteration Act, no absolute guarantee of their genuineness can be given, but every effort has been made to secure the contrary.

And that is as much explanation as the present editor thinks to be good for you.



Another Englishwoman's Love-Letters

Letter I

BELOVED: This is your first letter from me ; yet it is not the first I have written to you. That sentence would naturally end with the words, What relation was A. to B.? Yet indeed I ask no conundrum. There are letters to you in this same writing lying in love's waste-paper basket.

This is my confession. I gather from a good model, recently published, that it is peculiarly charac-

2 Another Englishwoman's

teristic of the Englishwoman to take off her self-respect as it had been a garment before entering upon an epistolary course of affianced love. I wrote love-letters to you long before I had brought you up to the point.

I may go further, and beat the original Englishwoman on her own ground. I wrote letters to you even before I had ever met you or heard about you. They were to my betrothed, whoever it might be, like the trade circulars which are marked "Or Present Occupier." One has to get ready for things beforehand. I got in a stock of letters for my engagement just as I shall get in my trousseau for my—am I brazen? Once engaged, visits and congratulations occupy one so much that

one has little time left for literary composition. And unless one is literary, how are one's letters to be made into a tender little volume, bound in imitation vellum, which cockles when you open the book, and provided with green silk shoelaces to tie it down flat again ?

And you never knew ? Dearest, I love you for it, and am trying to believe that the disclaimer is not made out of politeness. There were moments when I felt that I was being fairly obvious ; the dear Uncle Grandmother took the same view. You see, I am so young. When I take anything up I work hard at it. I worked very hard at my engagement. It was trying—you will forgive me for saying this—to see you still hanging back

4 Another Englishwoman's

when everything was perfectly ready. And I could not speak ; I could only get lost at picnics and sit out dances in desolate places with you, and use my eyelashes.

I can never work for myself again. You must do that for me now ! This is such a rest to me. You are you, and you are all the rest as well. I lie in the beyond, and watch all else as shadows, and because of you. Read that through twice, and let me know what you make of it.

Dear U. G. has such quaint, precise little ways. She would like you to put it into writing, so that she may take it to Somerset House and get it stamped. If you do this, it must be simply to please her. For myself, I need nothing but you.

Oh, the perfect youness of you !
Devotion is unsatisfying, and ab-
jection must come to its help. I
am your footstool, your door-mat.
I kiss your beautiful, great boots.

6 Another Englishwoman's

Letter II

My jujube, my toy-lamb, my prize tomato !

And so she was a left-all-alone little girl, and had n't got no one to play with, and was all sobby-wobby. But he will come back to his teeny-weeny pussy-woosy-woosy just as soon as ever the naughty peoples will let him. Then he shall jump into a trainkin, and not never have no collisions, and puff-puff quite safe to the stationlet where his onliestest will be waiting for him with her tongue out.

And, O Angel-bird, if you happen to be going in the direction of Bond

Street, here 's a bit of silk that I want you to ——

.
DEAREST : I am so sorry. The Uncle Grandmamma had borrowed my special style, and I was obliged to begin without it for fear of missing the post. I am afraid I very nearly dropped into the genuine human document. My own style has a strenuous simplicity, an incurable literary character, and an oleaginous sentimentality — with one spark of humour to every ten pages, to provide relief and deceive the very elect. Yes, I am sorry that in those lines above I have written like a happy woman in love — that is, like a dear idiot with a new home-made language. But you must blame the U. G., not me. Dear

8 Another Englishwoman's

U. G. wanted to write to her dress-maker (enclosing five pounds, and saying that she was surprised at the tone which had been taken), and she felt that my style was the very thing.

She asked ; I could not refuse, and I know you are not angry. Though I love U. G. in a quiet, plum-jam way, but not the less real, she should be croquettes if you were hungry. The last phrase may not seem to you pretty, but it shows what can be done in the way of strong condensation. The ox in a tea-cup and the soul in a sentence ! You will observe that I have got my own style back again now.

Even with that, it is difficult to express complete abandonment and perfect self-restraint simultaneously. I do my best.

So to-day you are in London, and London is illuminated. Here all is dark, until the gravel of the drive thunders to the wheels of the station cab, and the bell vibrates, and you fall into my arms. No, I am not unhappy. Only, my happiness sleeps on pink cushions in a tree-top nest until your wide, glorious smile wakes it.

Adieu, most-rightly beloved.

Letter III

DEAREST : It has been such a funny day ! Congratulations on the great event are beginning to arrive. It is so witty of them to do that. They are posted, and then the postman delivers them. I have laughed till I cried about it. Some are the mere wiffle-waffle of ordinary politeness, and some show such a deep and seeing sympathy. Lady M. writes : " When a girl works patiently and perseveringly at anything, I am always glad to see her succeed." Isn't she sweet ? Just after you had gone yesterday Mrs. Blank called and was told the news.

She did not think she had ever seen you or heard of you. "Come out of it," I said, with a quiet smile. "He must have met you at the gates just now." She sank back in her chair and went deadly pale. She wants me to explain to you that the mistake was entirely due to her short sight. Even at the moment when you opened the gate for her she had doubts whether you really were the under-gardener; she is convinced that there was nothing in your appearance to justify her in throwing you that sixpence. She repeated feverishly several times that she congratulated me very heartily. She seemed a good deal broken up, and did not stay long.

Others are yet more quaint. Nan-

12 Another Englishwoman's

nan, of course, is Nan-nan. She came into my room this morning with a martial tramp, humming the Wedding March and bringing me my tea. Nan-nan is distinctly *natürlich*, and if I do not report her remarks, it is merely because I have got into the habit of drawing the line somewhere. If you want the details, apply to the other Englishwoman. Personally, I must content myself with saying that Nan-nan was a little previous.

When Roberts — no, not of Kandahar — brought round my pony this morning, he touched his hat sixteen times and did a step dance. I thought it such a nice, cordial way of showing that he knew and approved. Naturally, I invited him to discuss you with me, and he

said that he knew you when he was in service before, and that you were a "rorty young dog." Grooms in this part of the country are allowed a freedom of expression which elsewhere might be thought almost disrespectful.

"And Lord Lardy would smile and observe, 'How strange are the customs of France!'"

I don't know what "rorty" means, but I am sure you were, and I would not have it otherwise. I had been meaning to show your photograph to the new kitchen-maid, and to collect some further expression of candid opinion. But she has only been here three weeks, and I have the feeling that I do not know her well enough. Am I too shy? I will be all that you wish.

14 Another Englishwoman's

I have a great longing at times for you to set me difficult things to do. No ; not to say six times quickly that he stood at the door of Burgess's Fish Sauce Shop, Strand, welcoming him in. Bid rather my wings and my eyes. Do you see the meaning? If so, you are fortunate. O dear heart, forgive me for being no more than I am ; many people are no more than they are, and one has to put up with it. Ever your own, own.

Letter IV

You told me, dearest, that I should find your mother formidable. I did ; if anything, you understated it. She is a person very much in the grand Berserker style. I admire it, but it comes a little heavy at an afternoon call. It seems to check anything that could be called expansion. Do you think you were quite wise to leave her to come alone ? It seemed to me that she should always have one or more attendants. I am told that some of the private asylums are quite comfortable, and trouble is taken to make the patients happy.

I like her ; I do trust that nothing

16 Another Englishwoman's

I have said has given you the impression that I don't like her. I hope that she will look in any time that she is passing, and if she will let me have a line beforehand, I shall know what to do. I believe that under a manner which purists might call slightly rude, she conceals a heart of gold; but she seems unable to get change and put a little of it into general circulation. She could forgive theft from the person with violence, supposing that it were some other person. You feel at once that she will be sorry for it afterwards when she is quiet, and that when she is quiet she must be much less noisy. "Eccentric"—allowing the usual margin for politeness—sums her up. Oh, I *am* so fond of her !

I understand, and can readily believe, that you have known her for some few years, and I have met her only once ; so it would be presumptuous for me to offer advice. Otherwise I would say—humour her. If she says that she is the Queen of Honolulu, and that she insists on your marrying Joan of Arc, I want you to welcome it as if it were a contribution to your plans for the future. Do be kind to her. Kindness, a straight waistcoat, and six easy lessons in how to behave at tea, are what she really wants.

I need not go through it all ; she will have told you all that did not happen, and by a process of exhaustion you can guess the rest. It was unfortunate that she should have come into the drawing-room with

18 Another Englishwoman's

the impression that she was engaging an up-and-down girl at a registry office. We did not shake hands. Our talk was very little of you. She began by asking me if I drank, and I asked her if she would like to go and see the canaries. I own I felt it. She said that she wanted a girl who would do the steps as they ought to be done, and not an upstart. Where did she get the upstart idea? My family was known and respected in Brondesbury for upwards of three years before we came to live in the country. I guessed that she would like frankness. I said that there was some misunderstanding, and that I wanted to marry her son. She replied that there was no harm in wanting, and that she had wanted her tea for the last half-hour. We

then went back to the drawing-room.

With reference to that phrase of hers which you quote about the muffins being "stone cold," I think that was partly because she insisted on taking them out into the hall and playing quoits with them. Is it quoits? It is rather untidy; so few of the muffins really went into the hat. She left early, and we have missed three teaspoons.

I do like her; she is worth winning. But there is something in her manner—I hardly know how to express it—which seems difficult to break through. It is hardly icy; indeed it is distinctly informal. When I asked her if I might consider myself engaged, she said she would tell me that after she had taken up

20 Another Englishwoman's

my character. It gave me the feeling that I had not really won her love.

Did I mention that I do like her, and that she has a heart of gold? I had meant to tell you that.

You must not think that I am *hurt*, either morally or physically. As regards the latter, only two of the muffins hit me in the face, and they are quite soft. And we have been having such a treat since she left. The dog, Benjie, has gone mad, Nan-nan has taken to drink, and I have wept for the last twenty-four hours consecutively. But these little things cannot affect us finally, and I hardly know why I have mentioned them. I want you very much to kiss your mother for me. It will have to be a runaway kiss, but you run very well, don't you?

Perhaps it would be better and safer not to say that the kiss came from me. Only would that be acting a lie? You see what a white soul I have got.

Oh, rock me in Love's cat's-cradle high above the swaying tree-tops, till the moon clouds are my nighty and my star-dreams light you. That is a specimen of my metaphorical style, so justly admired.

Adieu, most beloved !

Letter V

DEAREST DEAREST : This then is why for the last four days I have had no word from you. You have sprained your poor ankle, and that prevents you from holding a pen. (By the way, did you ever read *Nicholas Nickleby*?) I am so sorry for your pain that I cannot bring myself to ask whether the story, considered as a story, is altogether good enough. To think that I never knew ! I may even have committed the unspeakable profanity of writing with a light heart to you on whom this irreparable disaster has fallen. To a man with

a sprained ankle one must write in a sacred, hushed whisper. Well, I will not worry at not being told, nor at not being able to come to you. Until your dear mamma begins to like me a little, and removes the second-hand pom-pom at present trained on your front entrance, I feel that it would be better for me to be patient. By the way, was it your mother that suggested that sprained ankle? My letters must come instead of me, and take you up in their tender arms and kiss you to rags. You know, dearest, I do not love you any the less because you have got a sprained ankle; if you had lost your sense of humour as well, as I myself do at times, I should still love you.

24 Another Englishwoman's

Also I am sending you books. They include Dr. Pifbright's well-known *Thoughts on the Epithelium*, a *Whitaker* for the year before last, —full of useful information,—and *An Englishwoman's Love-Letters*. You need not return any of them ; in fact, I have been wondering what to do with them for some time past. May I make a strange request ? I desire that when you send me a present it may never be books. In all of them an alien voice speaks, and seems to drown the voice of you. I want to hear in your gifts your voice alone. Choose rather a diamond tiara or some other simple article of jewelry, dumb but for the words of love with which your voice has winged it. My birthday is on the sixth of next month,

when I shall be twenty-eight as usual.

Yesterday I went for a long tramp into the country, and did not get a sprained ankle. (You will find neuralgia makes the best excuse ; it comes and goes so quickly, and defies detection.) As the day was hot, I sat down on a bank, and up came a poor carter in such distress. His silver watch had leaped out of his pocket that morning on his way up the hill, and he was now retracing his steps and looking for it. I had not seen it, and could not help him. But as I went on my way up the hill I found a silver watch in the long grass by the roadside. My first impulse was to run after the man and ask if it was his ; but perhaps it was not the one ; silver

26 Another Englishwoman's

watches are such common objects of the roadside ; and, besides, the day was really very warm. So I minded my own business interests; and now I feel so bad, being quite sure that it was his, and that he did not really wish to part with it. And I wondered whether the chain went with it ; but I could not find it, though I hunted for a long time.

These microscopic and quite unintentional misdoings become "sins" to me, and haunt me always. I have quite a collection of them, and I will tell you about them some day. They are a grief to me, and I hope that you will understand from this that I have got beautiful feelings and a white, sensitive soul. Otherwise what is the good of talking? And, after

all, the shop at Sillingford would only give me five shillings on the watch, and they said that they had got cellars full of silver watches ; they ask one so many questions, too.

This is our first separation, but unless we keep separated we shall never get enough letters to make up a volume. It has always seemed to me to be such a pity to waste anything. So when your dear ankle gets better, I think I shall trump up a tour in Italy or the Crystal Palace, or somewhere about there. Your Star, and don't you forget it.

Letter VI

BELOVED : Indeed I am patient. I could prove that by telling you a little story about the Aunt Grandmother at her devotions, but it is slightly irreverent, and only very reverent people like slightly irreverent stories. Besides, you will find something similar in the love-letters of the other Englishwoman.

I give you, instead, something that I was reading this morning, one of the old lays of the Chevalier Albert. I have translated it quite simply from the original :—

“Hast thou forgotten yet that night in May,
At the tavern, at the sign of the Harp,
which is as thou goest by Hendon ?

Thou didst choose some simple viand,
some less potent drink :

Myself — so said I — the wine of the
country satisfies.

“ ‘Give me some hope,’ I said, ‘that I may
win !’

Thou didst answer by a gesture, not by
words.

We were as happy as could be that day,
At the tavern, at the sign of the Harp,
which is as thou goest by Hendon.”

If I were to alter the archaic style,
for which the quaint old French
seems to cry out, would you ever
guess that the poet did not belong
to this century ? Yet he did not.*
That shows the permanent ele-
ment in all good poetry, and gives
the reason of my patience. I can
remember — and kiss your old let-
ters threadbare. Strange that in

* *Query.*—But he does ? — PRINTER'S READER.

Answer.—She 's all right. He did n't once.—EDITOR.

30 Another Englishwoman's

your last you say "Extremes meet," for now an ironical whim of Fate's makes that true in your own house. I mean that you are afflicted in your foot, while your dear mother is weak in — but that is a sore point, or should be.

You say that you have not been able as yet to go at all deeply into the *Thoughts on the Epithelium*. I fear this must mean that you have been truly in pain. And I not there! If I could but get to you, I would read some of the more difficult passages from the works of Mr. Meredith aloud to you. If that did not actually soothe you, it would at least make you forget your sprained ankle, and perhaps the rest of yourself as well. The treatment would be on counter-irritant lines.

But I am not grumbling, and as a reward for my present submission I hope that some day, some day, Love, I know not when or how, your mother will sprain her ankle in my company (just a very little bit for an excuse), and let me have the nursing of it ! What larks ! Ever your own home-cured one.

Letter VII

WHY, my beloved,—since you put it to me as a point of conscience, and I can have no secrets from you, feeling indeed like a conundrum that you have guessed, if that can be guessed which is not asked, though I suppose I was asked—one thing, at any rate (if one can ask for what one has already—but not to know that one has is almost the same as not to have, as somebody——

Stop! All change, please.

I am in a complicated mood this morning, and that sentence has got itself tied up. I could go on

with its conditional and restrictive clauses for about the same length as the other Englishwoman, but I remember that you have a sprained ankle, and that may lessen your appetite for the gymnastic style in writing. So I will only say, since you call on me for a conscientious answer, that I have not yet secured a publisher for the letters. There are not enough of them to show yet, and I do hope that your dear mother understands that she must not break off the engagement until there are.

O my dearest one, I have been thinking that it would bump the book out a little bigger if I included some or all of those letters that I have mentioned to you already—love's waste-paper basket, the let-

34 Another Englishwoman's

ters that I wrote—so as to have them ready before you or anyone else of similar importance came along. I suggest, then, that your poor brain, worn by sleepless nights, is unequal to the task of mastering the different ways of addressing different titled people, so ably set forth in that back number of *Whitaker*. And I tear aside my poor last remnant of coyness, and give you instead those first outpourings of my soul before I had anywhere to outpour it. I cannot compete with the other Englishwoman in parodying the phrases of the liturgy, but you will observe in the first of the letters that I am not less ecstatic. The more I read them the more I feel that it needed you to make me articulate; in those letters I was

like one who hangs his hat on no peg at all. Now you are the eternal peg on which my hat and all of me hang for ever ; you hold me up in the stormy sea and shine on my path ; and before my metaphors get any worse I stop, only saying that I am always, dearest, your own.

THE BASKET LETTERS

A

To —— *

OH, amen, amen, amen !

B

DEAR SIR : Now that I have never met you, I pray that you will be my friend. I want it so much.

* In this space several names seem to have been inserted at different times and subsequently erased.

36 Another Englishwoman's

And even for that much I do not know how to ask ; it cannot be until you dawn on me. Oh, dawn soon ! Then I will ask for it, and see that I get it, and reject imitations.

Always to be your friend: that you shall be quite unable to dodge.

C

MY LORD : Long ago, when I was still a child, I made myself pictures of you. I remember telling Nan-nan that you were my ideal, and she said that ideals didn't wash. Do please wash, for mine and all the world's sake : even for your own. And let it be soon, because I am not as young as I was.

I wonder if you are waiting for me, and where you are waiting. When will you materialise ? What

is the colour of your eyes and hair ? Are you of a refined, musical disposition, affectionate and fond of home, healthy and industrious, and a convinced abstainer ? Shall I advertise ? And I wonder if you are wondering if I am wondering. Everything is very wonderful, but just at present a little one-sided. O supplement of myself, be published soon !

D

YOUR ROYAL HIGHNESS : That phrase is too magnificent to be cuddlesome, but in truth I do not know how to address you. The Portuguese Nun, Marie Bashkirtseff, and the other Englishwoman (and oh, what a beautiful tea-party those three would make !) were in this only happier than I am : they did at

38 Another Englishwoman's

least know to whom they were writing. How can one linger over the adorable qualities of one whom one has never seen, about whom one has never heard? All I know of you is that when you arrive you will be my friend to begin with, and that it will not be my fault if it stops at friendship.

Now I must cover my blushes with both hands, and make a very terrible confession to you who are my beloved. Sometimes I have thought that you have arrived, and I have been wrong. There have been some yous which were not really you. One finds out the mistake, but to have made it is annoying. I would that you were marked in plain figures, that if I only passed you in the street or saw you in a

crowd I might know that was you, and take steps accordingly.

When one thinks how many people there are that one does not in the least want to marry, and how many there are that do not in the least want to marry one, and how small one's social circle really is, any marriage at all seems a miracle. To think that, gives me the blue-moon hunger, for particulars of which I will refer you to the other Englishwoman. Yet it is a miracle that takes place occasionally ; so one gathers from the papers. Shall I be part of a miracle soon with your kind assistance ?

E

YOU ! Yes, I have no doubt this time. You have arrived, and it is

40 Another Englishwoman's

really and truly you. There can be no doubt about it ; it is woven into every half-yard at the back ; it is on the capsule ; it is everywhere. You, you, you ! My heart sings it : I know it, I feel it. And half the mystery of love lies in the fact that you yourself do not know it yet. You think that you look on blossom, beyond you or anything but poetry. Did you never hear of the pear that lay "basking over the wall," that needed but "a touch to try, and off it came" ? I know no more exasperating sight than the man who does not know his own blessedness. O blind eyes ! You are blessed, did you but know it. Dear blind eyes, how shall I kiss you into perfect vision, without a previous invitation ? And how

shall you invite the cure until it is no longer needed? There lies the eternal deadlock, responsible for the million of surplus women. There is no help, saving in the exercise of the most beautiful tact. O dearest, I cannot actually propose to you; there the outworn conventions still hold me. But I can—and, oh, I do!—show you that if you propose you have nothing to fear. Surely the fairies smiled on my birth that I have ever been called tactful. If hints will do it—how can one measure or describe it? Only now, with all due regard to my maiden modesty, I think I may permit myself to send you the ghost of the shadow of a spirit-kiss. And it comes to you like the deposit with an agreement

42 Another Englishwoman's

to purchase, with the certainty that there is much more to follow.

I have read this over again, wondering if your eyes will ever fall on it, and this thought comes to me : there have been bad women in books, but did anybody ever mark a good woman down so cheap as I mark myself? I know one similar case. She was an Englishwoman too ; at least she said she was.

Think often about me, for I think always of you—how to catch and how to keep you, and, incidentally, how to make a book out of you.

.

BELOVED: Those are not nearly all the letters in the basket. I have omitted any that were at all silly, though you would not perhaps guess from those I have sent that I

could write anything silly. And there was a too-muchness about some that made them a little rich for an invalid's appetite. So be very thankful for what you have got, prays your loving one.

Letter VIII

OWN DEAREST: If, as I gather from your last, you are really better and have been well enough to read again, I wonder if you have noticed how my esteemed fellow-worker in this vineyard loves to give inanimate objects a personality. I ask myself whether the trick can be acquired. I shall know before this letter has folded its wings and tucked itself into its envelope-nest. I am inclined to think that it can, and that in fact it ought to be well within the scope of a good performing horse.

The house partially emptied itself

this morning. A bitterly busy express threw a hasty smoking-compartment round Arthur and ran off with him shortly after breakfast had got itself happily eaten. Yesterday, you remember, was the day which had quite intended to bring you together. To-day also volunteered to keep Arthur for you, if that had been possible for you. Alas, it was not to be! But to make up for this, comes your good news, with pink flags flying, and lifts me into cloud-land. (And now that I find that little trick can be acquired, indeed even too easily, I will give it a rest ; it frightens me rather as a thing that might become chronic.)

I cannot help feeling that I ought to have brought Arthur into these

46 Another Englishwoman's

letters before. He must have slipped my memory. He was full of questions about you, which I answered coolly enough, as far as I have the figures. And then suddenly : "What does he look like?" I said you looked more like a Greek god than anything English or earthly. He said rather doubtingly that he had supposed so. Then, for he is the one I am most frank with : "Arthur!" I cried, took a long, strong pull at the chain, and up came your locket like a fish out of water. It has that photograph of you that was taken on the sands at Margate last year. I showed it, and he dropped flat on the floor. But all he would say was that it was not fair to judge from a photograph, but he thought you would

have looked better if you had not been dressed in a golf cap, a frock-coat, striped flannel trousers, and carpet slippers.* I am afraid Arthur has leanings towards the merely conventional, but you shall educate him to your level. I say this last jestingly ; for of course you have no level, and are the topmost gooseberry on the bush, sitting alone as the nightingale sings, while any language that tries to express you simply gives it up and goes home.

My soul is gone a-dancing at the good news, and now until you come I cannot breathe quick enough. How strange that your ankle should

* *Query*.—But would he dress like that? I don't seem to understand the position of these people.—
PRINTER'S READER.

Answer.—No more do I. Only three people do. It's part of the mystery.—EDITOR.

48 Another Englishwoman's

arrange to get well on the very day that your mother goes off duty for a week ! And yet somehow it is not strange. I hope you will be kind to her, and see that she does not miss her train : I know how annoying it is to old people to miss their trains ; it is far preferable to have ten minutes to wait at the station. Pray give her my love, but not until the train has just started, for otherwise she might want to get out and come and see me about it. Everybody has always adored me, and I cannot understand how she resists the charm ; as a rule I am simply mesmeric with mothers. But no more on a painful subject when I can think that in a few hours I shall—I am too shy to say.—Your own only.

Letter IX

OH, my stars and garters, here you come with your little lot ! Ever since the postman came I have been in our toppermost room, overworking a poor little field-glass to see if I could detect you in the offing. Roberts (not of Kandahar) is going into the offing or thereabout to order one more chop and one more potato—you will stop to luncheon ? He will bring you this with a touch of the hat and partially suppressed squirts of laughter. What perfect manners that boy has got ! I have just screwed the glass up a little further, and have detected some-

50 Another Englishwoman's

thing in the dim distance which is either you or a cow or a pantech-ni-con ; if I could kiss it I should know, but I must wait for you to tell me. Look out for me as much as you can without falling off the bicycle : don't attempt to wave till you have more control of the machine, which you will get with practice, and then long may you wave ! If I am slightly incoherent, that is the result of my excitement. Dearest, press this to your marble forehead and try to think it is me ; I shall be there soon afterwards.

Letter X

DEAREST: Here comes a letter to you from me flying in the opposite direction and firing my epistolary volleys as I retreat ; I hope none of them will miss. And I am so glad that the Uncle Grandmother had the brilliant idea of visiting the part of Italy that lies just beyond Baedeker, because from the point of view of the book it is all for the best. I have thought (indeed they were pressing me to take something for it before I met you) that, left to myself, I should have become a writer of books—I can scarcely guess what sort, unless they had been a collection of spoof

52 Another Englishwoman's

love-letters. And even now I cannot bear to waste good material or not to use it to the best advantage. More or less monotonous protestations of love will not make a book by themselves. The public would get tired of the eternal cat-on-the-tiles. So in the letters which come next, love will have to take a seat at the back of the hall more or less, while I give you the experiences of a traveller, and some interesting information about Arthur and the U. G., and bits of landscape, and other luxuries. You don't mind, do you? After all, you know my heart. As Dante—was it Dante?—says somewhere :

*“Io saró il vostro amante, se voi volete essere
la mia ;*

Tutta la mia vita saró il vostro valentino!”

Now I come to think of it, you do not know Italian, but indeed the meaning is of all languages and times.

I say nothing about our Channel passage, but do not conjecture from that that we did not have a passage. Now I come to think of it, you had better not conjecture anything about it at all. Then days of travelling with eyes closed and thoughts of you and other things. At last through the sunset limits of Baedeker—always bathed in that strange crimson tinge—and so to our peaceful pavilion in Bosco San Giovanni. Here we are to rest for a little while, though I fear the strenuous and funereal U. G. will insist on a flying visit to Verde Kensale to-morrow. You know her

54 Another Englishwoman's

quaint ways. I shall be sure to let you know the order of our going.

Yours truly,—which phrase is a change and a cold bath, both very refreshing things after a long journey. Write often.

Letter XI

DEAREST : Even as I predicted, the Uncle Grandmother had her own way, and took us all off to Verde Kensale after breakfast this morning. The way proved longer than we had expected, and we were glad to rest in the enclosure. It does not seem to me to be altogether the place to spend a happy day ; yet the natives gather there, less perhaps from a desire for quiet meditation than from a strange processional instinct. The general style of the tombs may, I think, be traced to the Via Eustonia. If you love me as much as I know you do,

56 Another Englishwoman's

I do not want you to bury me in that enclosure, nor anywhere else until I am quite dead. There is another enclosure somewhat similar in the neighbourhood of Corte di Conte, and, so far, I have, with a kind of playful treachery, kept the U. G. from all knowledge of it. Dear charnelly-minded U. G. ! It is as difficult to get her past a cemetery as to get a drunkard past a public-house. Another funny little trait in her is the way she ignores any but the conventional and desirable situation ; the things which she would like, and which, normally, would be, are for her the things which are—even in the spiteful face of facts to the contrary. That is, perhaps, why she writes so frequently to your dear

mother — and I do not know why your dear mother never replies ; but I have an instinctive feeling that either one of them ought to stop or that the other ought to begin. But enough of a subject of which one cannot speak yet with any real pleasure.

Bosco San Giovanni is adorable, and I wish that we were to remain here for a much longer time. But, as the U. G. says, caretakers cannot be choosers. The caretaker system of making a holiday has, of course, much to be said for it from the point of economy, and it gives one a curious insight into the interior life of the people of the country ; but, naturally, one has to move out when the family comes back, and that cramps one's plans

rather. Many artists live here ; also artistes. The architecture is pleasantly irregular. Some of the houses have got lattice-work on them, and some of them have got mortgages, but all of them have got something. And wherever there is a copper door-knocker, you may be quite sure that there is a great soul somewhere on the other side of it. Arthur, who shares my enthusiasm, is a marked success with his beautiful brown curls. Bright-eyed maidens, as he passes them in the streets, exclaim shyly : “ *Ecco cappelli! Ecco cappelli!* ” and he smiles with conscious pride. Yet there are some people who think he ought to have it cut. The gondolas are all in full song just now, and wonderfully tame ; they

will perch on your wrist, and in exchange for the crumbs from your intermezzo, go through their charming repertoire; but they won't wash clothes. Dear U. G. delights in feeding them. They flock all around her and all about her and all over her. She does not mind; she says: "*Lasciateli venire tutti quanti!*" It is an old proverbial saying here.

To-day nothing would suit Arthur but that we two, he and I, should tramp off together to Cespuglio di Pastore, where the Condotto di Due Soldi comes to so sad an end. Do you know the beautiful old legend of the Condotto? It is said that once upon a time it was thought to be the cause of strange vibrations in the houses built over

60 Another Englishwoman's

it. But these vibrations were really due to the prolonged sobbing of six governesses who had been reading *An Englishwoman's Love-Letters*. And these six governesses came forward and confessed, and so the Condotta di Due Soldi was saved. Perhaps it is not quite true, but that is the old story, and I like to believe it. Well, trusting to Arthur's cross-country instinct, we missed our way, and a short cut became a long round, and ultimately we turned up at Croce di Re. We must have gone a dozen miles or so. Fortunately, Arthur had slipped a couple of *confetti* into his pocket before starting, and when we got hungry we munched these as we went along. Also a russet-skinned Italian by the roadside sold

us tiny glasses of some cooling sweetmeat ridiculously cheap. So we did not do very badly, and I feel more than ever that this is the real Italy, if the tourists of the beaten routes did but know of it.

But now I am very tired, and must cosify myself into my bye-bye and dream that my adored one has been made king of the world.

Your obedient servant.

Letter XII

DEAREST : This morning I was awakened by the splash of rain on the windows, and thought this would have to be a day of letter-writing and small occupations with the U. G., but the sun and the early coffee arrived together, both hot, and so it came to pass that we walked out into a world washed clean and dried and set to music. Of that there is even more than enough ; at least I do not think that I wish to hear *il mendicante distratto* any more. But some of these songs, sung by quite simple peasants, are wonderfully beautiful

in thought and feeling. One line especially haunts me, from a song half forgotten now though not old—these born artists tire so soon of their playthings! Here it is: *Tutto il mio desiderio*,—I heard a great black-eyed girl singing it as she stood in the sunlight—*Tutto il mio desiderio sarebbe un pezzetto della cima*. It means, since you do not know Italian, that all she wanted was quite a little thing, but that it had to come from the summit. No common greed there, but an artist's sense of value, and an aspiration flaming upwards. Well, dear U. G. did six churches with churchyards attached, tired herself out, and said it was me, and I cried; and then we found a little shop, almost English in appearance,

64 Another Englishwoman's

where they sold milk and buns. A creamatorium the U. G. called it, which Arthur says is proleptic, and I feel sure is inaccurate. But there we comforted ourselves, and but for your absence all would be well.

Your letters are my soul's hair-restorer. Benjie* brings them up to me in his mouth every morning, and taps at the door with his tail. He has dropped one only once, and that was when he had a cough. Your last was especially dear, and full of trusting love. No, I am not angry with your mother for saying that. I remember always that in the

**Query.*—Surely this must be wrong, is n't it? She said in a previous letter that Benjie had gone mad.—
PRINTER'S READER.

Answer.—Quite all right. The other Englishwoman had one cat with several names to it; why should not this Englishwoman have one name with several dogs to it?—EDITOR.

days when she was responsible she was partly responsible for you. If she chooses to believe that we have never got any nearer to Italy than St. John's Wood, N. W., she must believe it. It is the more sweet of you to have no suspicions at all; the love that laughs at the evidence of stamps and post-marks, that is the love heroic. No other would ever have satisfied me. Continue, please, to send your letters to my home address, and the servants will forward them. This is simply because your first precious letters had a penny stamp on them, and I want the others to be just the same; if I got a letter from you with a twopenny-halfpenny stamp on it, I should think that you had changed towards me in some way. This is

purely fond, as our forefathers would have said, and I say in a different sense, but do not laugh at me. Only believe in me, and I will give you as much to believe as I can. Who was it said that suspicions are like bats, useless without a good handle?

We have been to see the Arco di Marmore, which looks to me as if it had been put there because it was too good to throw away, as I believe was the case. And—did I tell you?—on Saturday we had almost an adventure. Arthur took me to Cespuglio di Pastore, where the Condotta di Due Soldi starts so gloriously on its career. There is a beautiful old legend about the Condotta and the six governesses. I must tell you it one of these days.

At least, Arthur meant to take me there. But he trusted to the lie of the land—which on the face of it seems a silly thing to do—and we turned up at Croce di Re, and must have covered something like a score of miles before we got home.*

The T——s are always here when they are wanted, and always go when they are not. Really, they are most tactful. If one says that one is dead tired, and that, after all, there are times when one would prefer to be alone, though it is but

**Query.*—But this won't do. We had it all in the last letter, only put differently. Shall I strike it out?—
PRINTER'S READER.

Answer.—Hush! Don't say anything. It's an imitation of an ordinary blunder to be found in genuine letters; it's done on purpose.—EDITOR.

Query.—But if it had been a genuine blunder in genuine letters, would not you as the editor have omitted it as a needless repetition?—PRINTER'S READER.

Answer.—Oh, don't argue!—EDITOR.

68 Another Englishwoman's

the ghost of a shadow of a hint, they seem to understand at once that they are not being pressed to stay to tea. We have the P's and Q's also, but we never mind them. To-morrow we go on to a villa at Capella Bianca ; new experiences crowd in upon me so fast that to capture them all in blue-black ink is like doing up the buttons of one's waterproof when one is running in a high wind. You will find me, by the way, surprisingly little tanned by the Italian sun ; but this I attribute entirely to my constant use of (THIS SPACE TO LET FOR ADVERTISING PURPOSES), which renders the skin beautifully soft and white, and preserves one's complexion even under the most trying circumstances.

What stores of joy I am laying up

against our meeting ! If you could get a day off you might join us here. In the meantime, here are my kisses ; please take one, as they say in shops. Your ark-strayed Dove, since you call me so.

Letter XIII

DEAREST : Capella Bianca is all around me as I write, with its crowded streets, its distinctive costumes, its grey atmosphere. Skill to paint me, or you, a picture in pen-and-ink, I never had. But the note is restlessness. The very architecture seems to have sung itself out and died, and produced all this in a kind of posthumous tumult. The language spoken is itself a kind of contortion. On the many activities of the place the curtain seems never to be rung down. It all suits the untiring U. G. better perhaps than it suits me.

Arthur is away for the present, staying with a friend in Festa di Maggio, where we are to rejoin him soon. In the meantime the U. G. has me all to herself, and naturally finds that a treat. Indeed she needs little else. She did call at the great hospital here the other day, in the hope that she might be permitted to see a few operations performed, but she seems to have been repulsed ; she says that the young man was almost rude to her. Now she sits at the table where I write, contentedly gumming some newly acquired specimens into her collection of memorial cards. Arthur's secret intention in his absence from us is, I know, "*fare le sale*," as they say here. Strange that both my dearest men should have that

72 Another Englishwoman's

touch of the "rorty young dog" in them.

For excursions farther afield we take a most curious shandrydan, with a driver of whom we are making quite a pet. "Jehu," I call him — is n't it bright and original? His vehicle is of a type common here, so wonderfully constructed that if the horse falls, which it does frequently, the passengers are at once shot out into the road. Jehu is particularly smart, and the shine of his hat seems to shout, "*Che prezzo me?*" to the rest of his confraternity as he drives us along. He says such quaint, strong, ensanguined things — but of course you do not know Italian. Fortunately for us, his horse is not too devotional. The longest drive that

we have been yet was to a place near the Via Fornajo, where the U. G. wished to see the Camera d' Orrore. But you do not want guide-book stuff from me.

We are going to have a little jest with Jehu before we leave here. It is all arranged and planned. We are going to let him drive us about to different places the whole of one day, and finish up at a shop with a side entrance into another street. Then while he waits at the one door we shall go out at the other. Cannot you imagine how he will grin and show his white teeth when he sees the fun we have had with him? But he may be a little annoyed too, the joke being rather against him. You would hardly suspect the U. G. of such playful-

74 Another Englishwoman's

ness, would you? And certainly her tastes as a general rule do tend toward solemnity. But already she has indulged in one witticism with this same Jehu: she paid him the other day with a *stumerina*, and he accepted it. A *stumerina*, I must tell you, is a coin which is not exactly what you might suppose; if a cabman finds out that you have tried to pay him with one, he often gets quite silly. I do grow so confused with this Italian coinage, by the way. The worst of making a pet of one's driver is that one is tempted — and I confess that we often yield to the temptation — to treat him with more generosity than one would generally show in what is, after all, a business matter. I must write and tell

you how our last little jest with Jehu succeeds.

Is this more about Jehu than you care to hear? Of myself I have nothing to say but that I am as happy as a thing can be that is published in instalments, and looks to a blissful ending. Yet if we were not parted there would be no book, for there would be no letters. Would it be of any practical use to send your mother messages? If it would expedite matters at all, then I need hardly say that my love is waiting like coked soda-water to fly towards her. If not, you may leave the cork in. Regard my message to her as a blank cheque for you to fill in as you think best. If the bee despises the flower, then relatively to the bee

76 Another Englishwoman's

the flower is honeyless. I wonder if you have any idea at all how remarkably easy it is to write like this : and yet you say that my metaphorical style dazzles you. Bless you, dearest ! Your own
Copyright in Great Britain, America, and the Continent.

DEAREST : Postscripts, as you have noticed, I never do write. This is really another letter or letterlet — a little baby hanging on to the skirts of its big sister and asking to share its envelope-crib. It is only to say that I do not think much of Michael Angelo, and that he would be sorry if he knew. It had just occurred to me that I ought to give you a little art. Behold it !

Letter XIV

DEAREST : Our programme with Jehu was not carried out quite as we had planned it, because he had got another driver to watch the side entrance of the shop for him. These Italian drivers are a suspicious class. Of course the U. G. said what could be said,—that we were just looking for him, and so on,—but it was not a complete success. I think I should have left it at that. I was sure all along that it was a mistake on her part to offer him a new English farthing and tell him that he could keep the change. It was so evident that he

78 Another Englishwoman's

was not in the mood for that kind of thing. However, it was done, and he got very rude, and threatened to call the "*Rame*"; he said we were *bilkerinas*, and he would never drive us again. That is the worst of making a pet of one of these men ; he gets spoiled, and it is all so much kindness thrown away.

I think I must have the "snaps," whether because of Jehu, or because I have no letter from you again to-day, I know not. But the other Englishwoman had the "snaps," and I am not going to be left behind—which once said, I will be quite good and meek again, and smooth my plumage. Bother you I could not wish to do ; only a little anxiety will haunt me that

you may have broken a few more of your ankles. And when your letter comes, it shall show me that this is foolish. So now to pleasanter things.

We are now in Festa di Maggio, and the guests of Arthur's friend, Mr. Smith, who is most attentive and cordial. (The other Englishwoman would have called him Mr. S——, and perhaps that would look more as if one were being discreet and mysterious, but after all the name Smith is not an absolute identification.) Of Festa di Maggio itself I will say very little, because when our happy days come I think we must live here. Think of a beautiful green stretch, through which a river serpentine. As a rule one misses here the comforting

80 Another Englishwoman's

green of an English landscape. And to that you must add most beautiful flowers, somewhat primly planted, and great trees and formal walks. Well, there is a lane which overlooks this place. It is only a lane, but you must not despise it ; there are houses in it, some of them quite big enough for two lovers to sit and hold hands. (Five minutes here while I kiss you.) Thanks ; right away.*

Now let me hasten to tell you before I promise not to say a word

* *Query*.—These people have just come from a care-taking job in Whitechapel, where they seem to have filled in their time with tricking a cabman ; now they are honoured guests in Mayfair, and she talks of taking a house in Park Lane. Can you explain it ?—PRINTER'S READER.

Answer.—What 's all this about Whitechapel and Mayfair ? The girl said distinctly she was in Italy, and she ought to know. You seem to me to make difficulties for the love of it.—EDITOR.

—a method which is strictly honourable and yet satisfies the human passion for handing things on. Arthur has an affair of the heart, which is of course inexpressibly comic. That sort of thing is all very well for you and me, who can make it into a tender, lily-scented poem, but it is too absurd in anybody else. They write letters to one another, and he carries her likeness about with him in a locket. Poor Arthur ! I am so fond of him, that in his case I refuse to see any but the ridiculous side. But there is another side as well ; such things are, as it were, an infringement of our copyright. We do not want a lot of amateurs crowding in ; they spoil everything. I do not think any other love-affair but ours ought to be allowed, until

ours is quite finished and we are happily married. The lady of his choice, by the way, is a native of Capella Bianca, and speaks with the fascinating accent of that country ; but she has few if any metaphors, and I should say that her letters would be quite uninteresting.

Last night Mr. Smith took me to see the marvellous excavations which are always going on in the Via della Flotta, a street which continues itself into the Piaggia. The excavations look very picturesque by night, but seem to be strangely unpopular with the natives—probably in consequence of some local superstition. We came back by the river, and perhaps the damp air and the mists of the river were responsible for the cold which at present

afflicts me. It is a cold id by doze, if for once I may spell as I pronounce. But you need not be nervous about it, for Mr. Smith takes the greatest possible care of me. He is quite a sympathetic person, and seems to know all my tastes as if by instinct. He has faults, of course. He is far too extravagant, especially in the matter of presents, and I think he frequently does things without consulting his mother ; one has only to look at you to see that you would never do that.

Some words in my last letter from you made my heart leap. It is where you say that you may be taking a holiday yourself, and that you would like to join us in Italy. That would be rapture ; perhaps you

84 Another Englishwoman's

could persuade your mother to come too. I hardly dare to think about it. But I must tell you that it is possible that before you can take your holiday, the dear Uncle Grandmother, who feels the heat here very much, will wish to return to England. In that case a week at Hunstanton would be pleasant and at the same time more economical. Can you shrimp? I have heard that when one has shrump once one never forgets it. Of this I would say more but that Mr. Smith's carriage is here, and he is waiting to take me out. A happiness so full and rich as mine can spare something for the happiness of others. And I shall be happier still if your beautiful holiday dream only comes true.

One hasty line more to say that you must not think that I was comparing you with Mr. Smith at all ; I could not be as absurd as that. I am always seeing points of difference between you. You, for instance, have a far finer control of your temper, though perhaps he has more control of his mother's temper.

Here is love—cut where you like. And now good-bye for a little while, and I pray it may be the littlest possible. MY SOLE LESSEE.

Letter XV

BELOVED : If two days slip by—a contingency which occurs with some frequency in lives of the normal length—I don't know where I am. Things get so crowded in such a short book—I mean in such a short space of time. I cannot for the life of me think what I said in my last letter, or why I said it, and I don't know where to begin this letter. I'm just all anyhow. Things have been so rapid here. Mr. Smith likes rapidity, and as he is our host and Arthur's friend, one tries one's best to keep up.

So I turn to your letter and your

great news. A truce till February ? that is well, for it completely knocks on the head any consanguinity theory ; at any rate it should do, but one never knows. And as the struggle then can end in only one way, if these letters are to have as much pathos in them as will lie on a threepenny-piece, it is hardly worth while to make any overt signs of preparation for any other contingency. You do not tell me *what* your mother's objection to me is, and of course I do not ask. That is so beautifully natural, is it not ? No girl would ever dream of asking why her engagement was to be broken off. That would be simply morbid curiosity. After all, what business is it of hers ? I will think about it and let you know

88 Another Englishwoman's

my opinion later. I remember that when she came to see me she said that I was not old enough. But I do not think it was seriously said—at least so far as you and I are concerned: she meant old enough for domestic service.

To answer business-like to your questions first: we leave here on the 46th, or some earlier or later day, and we shall probably return *via* Marseilles, and Yokohama, changing into the Orient Express at Clapham Junction. As at present arranged, the date of our arrival will depend very much on when we start; but if we decide otherwise, I shall be sure to let you know. I am tempted to hope that the “truce” sets you free now, and then you could meet us here after

all ; but I think the Hunstanton idea is the better one. You see, I am not quite sure that you would like Mr. Smith, and, as I told you, the Uncle Grandmother feels the heat ; so now you know the difference between the U. G. and a pedicure. I wonder if we shall all meet and travel down together ! If I am to have that great happiness, I must tell you something about trains which shows what an exquisitely sensitive nature I 've got. When I was quite a little child I was very sorry for trains, because they went so far, and nobody patted them or gave them sugar. Even now I have something of the same kind of feeling. Why should one despise machines because they are only machines ? When a little party of

90 Another Englishwoman's

people come on to a platform and all get into the same carriage, I am sure that the rest of the train feels rather wounded and neglected. So when I am travelling I always persuade those who are with me to distribute themselves as much as possible. If you get the tickets, please take a first-class for myself, a second-class for the U. G., a third for Arthur, and a horse-box for your dear self. Can it really be that in a short time I shall have the bliss of being drawn by the same engine as you ! Oh, I must not hope too much !

Never mind now about the poor letter which went astray ; there is enough happification in your last to make up for the disappointment. But I will own now, what I would

not let myself say before, that I had wondered whether your dear mamma had caught you at it, and had taken away the ink and paper, and spanked your hands. And now for sheer joy I think I must do some mad thing. I have had an idea that I should like to dress in the costume that the peasants wear here. Would you like me a little in a rich brown *risotto*, with a crimson *felucca* on my head? If I were to dress like that in London, it would be almost mad enough for me. Mr. Smith says it would be charming; I think he must be tired of looking at me, for he does it so much. That is one of his faults, and I scarcely think you and he would get on well together; but he has certainly been most kind and attentive.

92 Another Englishwoman's

He has nice eyes. Is that as much as you want to hear about Mr. Smith ?

I have quite finished with my cold now, and the U. G. has it. Yesterday she was very depressed, and spent her time chiefly in writing her own epitaph, beginning :

“How oft life's strongest flight is
Cut short by laryngitis !”

But this morning she has just breakfasted on a couple of poached eggs and part of a clinical thermometer—I always knew that accident would happen sooner or later—and seems much more cheerful.

How are you ? Not overworking that poor ankle, I hope ? Reading ? Thinking about me ? It was nice of you to ride over to see Uncle N. We never take him with us on these

holiday visits, but the servants have instructions to see that he is regularly fed. And now how am I to send you my love, for all the postmen in the world could not carry it? It started by being bigger than possible, and it has gone on steadily ever since. You did not know there was so much, did you? You just pulled the string, and it came all over you, and now you are powerless to stop it. Your own love shower-bath.

Letter XVI

DEAREST : I think you must almost be able to hear the thudding of my heart, so loudly does it cry its joy to you. Your welcome letter has reached me, and the bliss of it ties me into nautical and undoable knots. All that you have arranged is perfect and fits us admirably. So to-day sees me in such a whirl of packing and making ready that I am forced to cling to my literary style with both hands. For the U. G. roams about with a covetous eye fixed on any unpacked thing, and a big trunk has already snapped its hungry mouth on all my note-paper except this one sheet.

We leave to-morrow. To think so few days lie between us now ! Would that I might rush towards you as swiftly as my thoughts do, and seem ever to have done ! But instead must come the long, slow journey, with all the snowy Alps nodding an affectionate farewell to me, and the deep blue lakes waving their hands, and every crevasse sobbing its good-bye. * And then—oh, then !

I wonder if Liverpool Street Station is feeling particularly happy. I think it must. I at least always feel so glad that anybody's glad. But Liverpool Street may have got hardened with a long experience of

* *Query*.—But would the scenery behave like that ?
—PRINTER'S READER.

Answer.—Go it ! Spoil the most poetical passage in the book.—EDITOR.

96 Another Englishwoman's

many reunions. Hunstanton must have flags waving in the secret heart of it, just as to-day the flags are waving in the heart of me—yes, and the band playing, and the balloon going up, and so much more that I can never express ! So ——

Alas ! the envious U. G. has just pounced on my literary style, because she wanted something soft to pack a hat in. And so if I am to fill this sheet it must be after this manner :

And was he a most 'stremely desolate person while she was away ? Wazzums ? What shall she do for him to comfort him ? Wrap him all up in pink rose-leaves and kiss him blue ? There then, don't cry any more. I am your little toy-duck, and you are the most power-

ful-strong big magnet, and I come swimmy-swimmy to you as fast as ever and ever. And then both go off to hunt weeny shrimplets in pools where there are n't any, and get two little lost persons that come home late to tea and make the U. G. say swear words. Say yum-yum three times slowly, please. Your most pussiest little Puss-kitten.

Letter XVII

BELOVED : See what an unfortunate effect your "rorty young dog" episode has had on me. When I read it I had no feeling of uneasiness of any kind. However, as I went to bed, the U. G. said to me : "You don't look well, child. I believe you are sickening for something." Sure enough, that night I could get but little sleep, being in a muzzy-brained state when everything seemed to rhyme with everything else. Six hours later the household knew the worst : I had turned your episode into our beautiful extra-cream home-made poetry.

I feel that I want to know more about that farmer's son. Strange that he should have warned you about the danger of using firearms in the direction of the moon, and after all these years should have shot the moon himself ! That seems to round the whole thing off and make it a literary work like the other lady's love-letters. It was clever of him to remove the furniture on his own carts ; that must have made it so much more difficult to trace him. I should imagine that his name will be remembered, among that part of the countryside which gave him credit, for many a long day. I would like to go there with you some day, and standing on Twyloch hill picture to myself how he must have smiled.

L. of C.

100 Another Englishwoman's

This is the first time I have come before your eyes as anything but a letter-writer with six months' character from her last place. I even doubted whether you would care to have so much about yourself, especially as the poem may seem to make much of what was after all an incident of no particular importance. But then everything that concerns you is important ; and the stream of sanctifying oil that all my previous letters have poured upon your head must have prepared you to have that importance exaggerated. I am most bitterly jealous of those days before you came under my benign influence ; I want to keep all their stolen-gooseberry flavour to myself. Could you have fallen in love with me at the age of

eight? When I remember how much persuasion on my part it took to make you understand that you had fallen in love with me twenty years later, I am inclined to doubt it. Do not think that I reproach you, or could, whose boots I kiss eternally. Sometimes I have the idea that I shall have to pay the price of my singularly whole-souled devotion, and in a very curious way. I shall meet a real English-woman, not the one who wrote those other letters, and with some mad notion of championing her sex, some conventional belief that they are not exclusively wriggling worms inviting men to tread on them, she will tear me into small pieces and throw me away. I suppose I am a worm: yet the worm hooks its

fish, does it not? I came before you and you took your hook: Oh, never take it again.

I want to know more about your boyhood, even the sad parts. Tell me if they ever spanked you and how much it hurt. I have always thought that you cannot have been spanked much when you were young; spankings come from disobedience and I think you must have been one of those who cannot disobey anybody. I do respect you for that. Now Arthur's friend, Mr. Smith, was quite different, and I am afraid that he has caused a great deal of needless trouble. The longer I live the more I am convinced that looks are not everything. But that has nothing to do with what we are

talking about. Silly of me to mention it.

Dearest bird, it was to me that you were winging your regular slow flight through all those years, though you took some time to realise it, and your mother does not seem to have quite taken it in yet. Mr. Smith told me—but wait, you said at Hunstanton that you were tired of hearing me quote Mr. Smith.

So I will say no more than that this letter is really up to standard length, if you include the poem which is given away with it. If you like our prose, try our poetry. We have a large assortment, and it is our endeavour to give satisfaction. O my bird, I am ever your waiting nest!

104 Another Englishwoman's

(Enclosure.)

My brother and I were down in Wales,
And bored the Welshmen with our tales ;
To which you partially may trace
The melancholy of their race.
He was eleven and I was eight—
Plain facts in plainest terms I state.
Amid our audience was one
We liked the best, the farmer's son.
He had the mightiest arms and legs,
And also sold our mother eggs,
And stimulated business thus—
By showing great regard for us.

Now one night as we pulled his hair
(A thing that might make some men swear,
But from a placid Welshman wins
A mere "Whtdmnsllynnsns !")
I told my exploits of the day ;
I'd wandered far and blazed away,
And with my small ingenious gun
Had aimed at birds and not hit one.

"Lucky for you this afternoon
You did not happen to hit the moon !"
Thus said the farmer's son to me,
And I : "What matter if I hit she ?"

(Unto my tender age refer
That little slip of “she” for her.”)

Quoth he : “The moon would splinter
straight,
And fall in lumps of monstrous weight.
Twyloch hill would be levelled down,
And flat as a flounder be Twyloch town.
And what on earth would you do,” he
said,
“If one lump fell on your little fat head ?
But there”—he noted my alarm—
“Eat more eggs and you’ll take no harm.”

Now I hear after years gone past
How he himself shot the moon at last ;
Sloped on a stormy night in May,
Sloped with a year’s back-rent to pay.
Out with his chattels and goods went he :
None knows what his address may be.

Only, I think, there seek him still
In Twyloch town and on Twyloch hill,
A Twyloch landlord, a Shyloch baker,
Butcher, and tailor, and candlestick-maker.

Letter XVIII

DEAREST : Do you remember that the other Englishwoman said on one occasion that she had been "sitting up to see eclipses" ? Those were her very words and they puzzle me a good deal. I am told that not more than one eclipse is visible in one night. Yet she did it, and did it on cocoa. If the cocoa had not been cocoa, I could understand her having seen two eclipses. However, now I come to think about it, she says that she did not see much because the sky was "piebald."

Well, last night the sky was a

bright bay with black points, and I sat up to see a piece of one eclipse. (You will observe that if I follow my dear pap-hearted model I do so with modesty and at a respectful distance.) You did tell me it was naughty. But it is only while you are awake that I am your trained obedient Pomeranian ; once your conscious self goes I am off on the scamper. A dear friend of mine had a somewhat similar experience. She loved with the totally unencouraged devotion of a great soul a man who had a hard-working steam-roller of a mother, much on the lines of your own sweet mamma. The mother was entirely opposed to the marriage, and she was strongly supported in her opposition by the son. While the

man was conscious, my dear friend found it impossible to make him obey her. But one day when he had severe toothache, under the guise of taking him to a dentist's to have it out, she lured him to a registry office. Gas was administered, and when the man came to he was legally married. He then prosecuted my friend for obtaining a husband under false pretences. She pleaded kleptomania, minority, gambling transaction, and contributory negligence ; she also counter-claimed for the anæsthetist's fee, and paid three-and-six into court. She got off under the First Offender's Act, but the man got off, too, the marriage being annulled. Since then anæsthetics have been forbidden in registry offices and a registrar

was dismissed only the other day for having in his possession cough-drops, which were shown to contain paregoric. Silly story, isn't it?

Now that I come to think it over I can find quite a number of reasons why I did not see very much of my eclipse. For one thing, I had the blinds down and the curtains drawn across them, because it made the room so much more cosy. Also as I was sustaining myself with saddening and somnolent buns I not unnaturally fell asleep. Then again the moon could not be seen from that side of the house, and as a matter of fact there was no eclipse that night. There were several reasons besides, but the few that I have given amount, I think, to an adequate explanation. However,

110 Another Englishwoman's

when the dawn came, I happened to awake, and took a peep out. It was so beautiful! The worms woke at half-past four, and the early birds shortly afterwards. Then out from the shrubbery came Fido with a gleeful new-day scamper. As he passed my window he paused and lifted up his near front paw as if in benediction. It is so comforting to think that even when one is asleep one's animals show these signs of affection! I am sure he thought I was asleep, for he went so quietly as if not to wake me; he never barked once.*

** Query.*—You said as distinctly as possible that all her dogs had the same name, Benjie. How do you account for this?—PRINTER'S READER.

Answer.—It's quite simple. Fido was a cat.—EDITOR.

Objection.—But she says he never barked.—PRINTER'S READER.

Answer.—That's right. Cats never do.—EDITOR.

Mr. Smith said he had seen the dawn quite a number of times. Have you? Sometimes I think that Roberts must have made an error in the way he spoke of you, and have confused you with somebody else. You have such a mild and kindly eye. O my beloved, you were much in my heart during my vigil! Can we ever be nearer, or love each other more, than we do? For *that* we should want a sixth sense, a second soul, a fourth dimension, and a boy to push behind. And even then it would be the same thing only more so. It would be more than I could bear. I should go up in a pale blue flame and become a new love-star. Would that be rather dull for you? I should spin about the heavens

writing your name in large letters of fire, until the police of the Solar System interfered. And you my poor astrologer would never take your eyes from me. In both cases there would be collisions.

How it rejoices me to write quite ecstatically to you ! And I never think what it must be to you to read it. I am like the young horses that (so long as they got through) forgot that the driver “ ’as ter git the bloomin’ ’bus through arter ’em.” They say that love makes selfishness, but surely I have no self any longer ? You are the sole proprietor, and therefore it is you, not I, that must answer for the selfishness ; and as it is you that must suffer from it, it cannot be selfishness at all. Oh, love’s sublime transmutations !

My dearest, you must come quickly to me to-day. Do not ride over on your bicycle, since time is a consideration ; come in a cab. You shall not be later than half-past two ; neither shall you be any earlier, since in the luncheon atmosphere love dwindles. You must, shall, and will come. (I used to play at the game of "willing" with Mr. Smith, and he said I was very good at it.) You shall find me more absolutely dead-ripe than ever before.

At half-past two I shall see you. When I think of it I throw myself down before you. Your foot on my neck, please. Thanks.

Letter XIX

BELOVED : Here is my ridiculous little pen quite furious to get to work again, though it has only the old things to say, and it must know that I am frequently hard put to it to find new ways of saying them. In fact, if our letter-writing does not die a divine death in the summer, I shall have to buy a new vocabulary or get a friend to help, or give out altogether. You ask why I have not written, and say that you thirst for a letter. Why, dearest, I could drink a hundred of your letters in a day and still feel stinted. In truth I have held my agile pen back with intent this time. There are some

of your questions to which I have no answer. To your enquiry why the primrose, I can reply at once, because the China aster. And to the question why had the fox-gloves it may be that a fitting response would be, to let the box box. But when you ask me, where had the French bean, I feel sure that it would be incorrect to say, to hear the larkspur, because of course larks don't. And after that you take me out of the garden into deep waters. "Should one not," you ask, "make great concessions to great unreasonableness, especially when there is a good supply of tears at the back of it." There is a case where one knows the right answer, but is wanted to give the wrong, and as a conundrum it is not funny.

116 Another Englishwoman's

Of course it is quite obvious that your dear mamma has been getting to work again, in contravention of the truce till February. My position is really rather difficult, as I am sure you will own when you come to think about it. I am supposed to be on affectionate terms with two people, yourself and your mother, who want exactly opposite things. I must never show any resentment, lest I wound her ; and I must make it quite clear that I feel it, lest I wound you. The best course seems to me to do what she does not want, but at the same time to send her my love and best wishes for a happy Christmas. And this is not an answer to your question ? I had hoped that you would come, and that I should give

it you by word of mouth. Then if I had wanted to go back on anything, it would have been easier. But if I am to write, then I must tell you that it is not fair to ask for an opinion of the right course under certain circumstances without telling the circumstances. What are they? And what do you mean by a concession? My offer that your mother should have the right of stopping what she wants to stop, for seven, fourteen, or twenty-one years, with six months' notice, seems to me to be a distinct concession. My offer for an extension of this to the term of her natural life also seems to me to be a still bigger concession. If you see any way by which I could go further and keep you, pray mention it. I

say this without prejudice. Really, I am quite in the dark. Especially I am in the dark as to how you manage to bring yourself to say this kind of thing. I should have thought that a worm with a gelatine backbone would—but do not let me vex you. Of course I quite understand, and of course I agreed at the beginning to fold up my self-respect and put it away in a drawer, or otherwise I might have asked, if a man cannot bring himself to part from the apron-strings in a matter of this kind, however great the suffering he inflicts on the woman he professes to love, is he worth—but again I say far more than my illustrious predecessor would have ever permitted herself.

But let us leave a subject that

even this long interval of time has not perceptibly sweetened. One day I shall win your dear mamma over, and, like all good things except myself, she takes some trouble. You had hardly to shake the tree and off I came ; indeed I seem to myself to have sung out " Please shake " from the topmost bough. Your mother has not that kind of stem: I think she's wired. Come and talk it over, and hope for the best. In the meantime fill your mind with thought of my waiting, reach-me-down love for you. And also ask yourself this : " At what did the crocus ? " And do not with a feverish desire to quit your mind of the subject at the earliest opportunity, answer: " At the hellebore." That is not right.

But, in spite of every indication to the contrary, I want you to believe that everything is right with us. I cannot bear to think that your weakest point is being assailed—that you are troubled in your mind. You did wish me to write openly, did you not? I have done it. Do not think from anything in the tone of this letter that I am any the less your own loving one. That must I ever be. Your own kiss-factory.

Letter XX

DEAREST : To-day we got an impression through the dining-room ceiling that the taps in the bathroom had been left running. So up I scampered in all haste, and found the source of the overflow—dear old Nan-nan* in floods of tears for grief over the way I am treated. I do think that great love ought to find great expression for its sorrow, and I seem to have a way of inspiring great love. I could not be angry with her. But though I per-

* *Query.*—How is it she is still there ? I thought she had taken to drink.—PRINTER'S READER.

Answer.—Merely “the blameless thirst of a rabid teetotaller.”—EDITOR.

suaded her to check her tears, that only gave her the opportunity for speech. She spoke for some little time. She began on the subject of your mother's antecedents, as to which I trust she is incorrectly informed. Then from their indecent obscurity she dragged your mother by the hair, to speak metaphorically, through the mire of a misspent life. She seems to know quite a good deal about your mother's career, but perhaps she exaggerates. Then she took your mother's personal appearance and ran it rapidly through the stamp-mill. In thirty seconds she had expended more varied and forcible language on your mother's nose than any other nose has received in the whole of the world's history. She walked

all around your mother and prodded her. She entered her in an imaginary dog show in the dachshund class. She cut up her moral character with a blunt knife, and threw the bits into a dust destructor, and she seemed quite annoyed when I interrupted her, explaining that she was only just beginning. I left the poor dear soul to her misery. I cannot convince her that I am quite satisfied with your mother's somewhat formal attitude towards me — "formal" hardly overstates it, does it?

I write this because you seem to have gathered from my last letter — in what way I cannot imagine — that I was wounded. Whatever made you think of that? You *do* surprise me. You and Nan-nan do

get such quaint ideas into your dear ridiculous heads. Conundrums often affect my nerves, and possibly I may have suffered from another attack of the "snaps" when I wrote last. Let not my lord's heart be troubled by the infirmities of his much-adoring one.

Yesterday I heard a little piece of news that saddened me rather. A youth who only two years ago thought that I constituted his only happiness has engaged himself to another girl. When I refused him he said most definitely that he could never love another. Perhaps it is an overkeenness of sympathy, but I feel a lapse from a high ideal in another, almost with a sense of shame, as if it had stained me in some way. His letter which I received this

morning was certainly not in the best of taste. He says: "I must thank you most warmly for saving me from a fatal blunder two years ago. When one finds the real thing, one feels almost angry at the ease with which one might have accepted something inferior before." And there is much more which might have been expressed more happily, to say the least of it. He was the only one. I had my signals down several other times, but the drivers always reversed their engines instead of coming on. There was a touch of the South-Eastern Express about you too, dearest. You were much behind time, and the signals had been down ever so long before you realised it and came slowly snorting in. And even now

your dear mamma is trying to shunt you off into a siding, instead of letting you proceed to your destination.

Arthur's friend, Mr. Smith, is coming to stay for a while at a house quite near to us. I suppose we shall see a good deal of him. Well, one must not let one's own great happiness make one selfish towards others, especially when they have nice eyes. But that will not be for another fortnight. How many times shall I see you in that fortnight, I wonder! Oh, come to me early and often, and stay late. The U. G. can be put in the breakfast-room, and Uncle N. can be sent to play at snowballs with Fido in the garden, and we shall have the drawing-room all to ourselves. And

that reminds me of a thoughtless and unkind act that I did many years ago, when I was quite a little girl. And though the results of it were all for the best, I believe, I still find it hard to forget it or forgive myself. It was in the days when Anna was engaged. She wished me always to be in the drawing-room when he called, but to go when she gave two short coughs. She wished to arrange it so that it might not appear arranged. One day a mischievous humour took me. She coughed, but I did not budge. She coughed again and again, and I sat and smiled. He began to look a little nervous. It may have been too that her colour was not quite artistic that afternoon. Anyhow, she has always said that the real reason

why he broke it off was that he believed her to be consumptive. Her next engagement ended in her marriage—one improves at everything with practice—and she is quite happy with her husband and the twins ; but that one unkind act still rankles in my conscience. What a tender conscience it is ! I can well remember that at the age of six months I one day lost my temper and kicked my nurse ; I did all I could to make her see that I was sorry for it afterwards, but the kick that is once kicked can never be recalled. Often when I lie awake at night I cry when I think over that little incident. Like any more incidents of my early childhood ? Not to-day, thank you ? Very well, then.

Sometimes a shudder runs right through me with a kind of ecstatic twist in it and a short jump at the end. I believe that this is when you are thinking about me. I often think that perhaps you are thinking that I must be thinking that you are thinking that I am thinking about you. Is that so? I want to come right into your dear thoughts and walk round and see everything. I cannot know enough of you. Oh ! the world was made only as a kind of background for you, and it is not nearly a good enough background. But it is sweet of you to spare me a little piece of it. Your kisses started the clocks, and there was no time before them. All waited for you. Your loving waiter am I.

Letter XXI

DEAREST : I do not know quite where you are ; though I understand that you are with your dear mamma. But wherever you are, you have made me happy. I confess now that I have been through dark days. There are some people who complain at the time when they are hurt, and these seem selfish. There are others who never complain at all, and these run a risk of being thought insensible rather than heroic. But I, with my great instinct for what will look best on paper, never complain at the time, but always remind people that

I might have complained subsequently. It is of no use to be a pure-souled, unselfish angel, unless one gets the credit of it. But here am I wandering about and making disquisitions when all I wanted to tell you was that I am very happy. Firstly, your letter sends me into an eighteenth heaven of joy, and is quite the sweetest you have ever written. Secondly, my present happiness will help to accentuate the following tragedy, which I think is about due now. You are with your mother again — and this can but mean that the axe is laid to the touch-hole of the cannon.

We have had a prolonged frost, which has come over from Russia, or else from your dear mamma. But as the postman came up the

drive with your most lovely letter the daffodils leaped from their frozen beds, and burst into an ecstatic and premature flowering, which has seriously upset the gardener. All is well ; the joy-bells of my heart thunder that against a new-born sun over the hills. In case you miss the exact point of that sentence, I may tell you that it is a sample of my poetical writing — bronze medal at the Paris Exhibition. And all my sorrow melts away with a triumphant ease before your perhaps too facile explanation that your last letter must have miscarried. Oh, write it all out again, and let me have it ! And press down the flap of the envelope in your usual manner, for I would not miss that *sepia mael-*

strom of your thumb. There is something so homely and comforting about it! It is just the same as when one gets the latest romance from the Free Library : for a moment one trembles as at an incursion into the unknown, and then one spies on the page the mark of some simple artisan's unwashed thumb. "Someone has been here before," one says, and reads with a feeling of deepened security, mixed, perhaps, with some other feelings.

Dear Share of the World — what a wonderful large helping of it you are to me — I feel that I could eat it all, and yet there is your mother wanting me to put some of it — nay, all of it — back. Oh, the true love that can take such zigzag snipe flights from the carefully sublime

to the naturally domestic ! I owe much to my illustrious predecessor in this line of business. I suffer—really suffer—that my jam-pudding of a brain cannot find words to paint more than my usual allotment of senses (Oh, these disgusting democracies of fate !) will communicate to it. I have the feeling that there is more, and that I am missing it. At times I almost have it by the hair, and then it is off, and I panting. Pity ; the book would have been original. And by the way, when one insensibly copies Meredith, it is always in what he leaves out, and never in what he puts in. From these high table-lands beyond vocabulary one must come back to the old familiar track ; and so I say that I love you

— a remark which I feel almost sure that I have made before. But I burn the meaning into it with kisses. Seeing that the other English-woman fancied herself in this accomplishment, and boasted of a possible hundred to the minute, I beg to state respectfully that I am prepared to make a match if any gentleman will provide a purse. Do not reply unless business is meant. Why, what am I saying? Another snipe flight from high aspiration to the general style of the small advertisement in a sporting paper, or rather some skylark's downward swoop, with underneath it a swan-song. This deceptive rally must, I feel, but prelude the last relapse. Your mother is quietest before the storm.

136 Another Englishwoman's

I read your letter again, and this mood of melancholy slips from me. I can close my eyes, and you and I are in a crowded room. People shake us by the hand, and we get rather tired of hearing the same things said over and over again. Gifts are arrayed on many tables, and as usual there are far too many pepper-castors. Two detectives, disguised to look exactly like detectives, watch them jealously. Will it be soon ?

Into what a starry happiness you have brought me ! The awe of it is too much for me. I swoon into your arms. Catch, please !

Letter XXII

WRITE to me ! I must have it in writing ! I will not accept my dismissal until I have it in writing. It is not enough to put your head into the drawing-room and say : “ It ’s all off, and so am I,” and then bolt for safety to your mother’s carriage in the drive outside. Write clearly on one side of the paper only, stating your reasons, and enclosing a stamped and addressed envelope for reply. Dearest, dearest, I am so upset I hardly know what I am saying : take my meaning. Your mother is not the only woman with a Berserker spirit in

her. Tell her that. Tell her it from me. Ask her if she has ever heard of an action for breach of promise. Oh, if I could only get at her ! I would make her see things differently, if at all. But they are all mad here, telling me to keep calm and not spoil my case. I can only write and write in a spasm of agony. I have split three J pens right up to their root on these few lines. I have spilt the ink. I'm not myself. I'm all sobs and sal-volatile.

Cannot you bring yourself to come out from behind those petticoats, and act something like an imitation of a man for once in your life ? It is not too late for you to explain that it was all a jest. I will accept that. What have I done ?

Have I not loved you enough ? If there is any phrase more abject than those that I have used, tell me it, and you shall get it by return of post. It was not I that threw the brick at your mother's carriage as she drove off with you. I swear it. It was Nan-nan, and she was acting entirely on her own initiative.

I will do anything on earth to get you back. An ordinary toad shall be a symbol of pride and spirit compared to me. I will even go as far as the other English-woman, and say that, "I cry to you to spare me." I will wallow in the deepest mud of self-humiliation until the reader of the letters is sickened and the success of the book is imperilled.

Here are kisses. These are our

140 Another Englishwoman's

cheap line, and are offered on terms that defy competition. I cannot see to write more. My hair has come down, my heart is broken, and I 've lost my pocket-handkerchief. I yelp and yelp. Does that not attract you at all? Oh, write to your cast-off adorer that keeps on adoring !

Letter XXIII

BELOVED: So you write, but give no reason! It is perhaps a pity that when you sprained your ankle I lent you, amongst other books, *An Englishwoman's Love-Letters*. That has given you false ideas. So far—I admit it—the only point where we have even touched real life has been my anxiety to publish a book. But if we are to come down to real life for a minute or so, it must inevitably occur to you that if a decent man has to break his word to a woman—whether for a reason of hereditary disease or consanguinity, or

142 Another Englishwoman's

anything else whatever — it is less cruel for him to state the reason than to run a mystery with a lot of cat-lap added about the break being no fault of hers. Anybody but an ignorant, stupid bounder would see that. And the man would not rise to any unusually snowy point of chivalry if, when he had given her a reason that really was a final reason, he spared her a humiliation and allowed the break to come from her. I'm not talking about anything Quixotic, but about life as decent people live it. And remember that even a woman who has played the cheap door-scraper to your Romeo has some spark of self-respect kept somewhere in the back-shop during the hot weather, and that a coolness may bring it to

the front again. The same woman that plays the door-scraper to your Romeo would decline to act the same part to an ignorant, stupid bounder. Even if she did, she has relatives, and there is a social opinion ; if you chose to live abroad, nobody would attempt to stretch the terms of the extradition treaty.

Have I been mad or dreaming ? For the first time I seem to have said something which is perilously near to common-sense. I own that I am not myself. Let me warn you that the U. G. has already ordered a plum-coloured costume, a picture hat, and a spotted veil for her appearance in court. She is naturally an economical woman and it will be difficult to stop her. Remember too that she has kept

the letter that you wrote when she asked for something that she could take to Somerset House. I pay for my board and lodging here, and therefore have a certain amount of influence. Also, as may be obvious to you, she cannot do anything without me. I can stay proceedings. So I feel sure that when you come to think it over you will be able to find some reason for the break, and will let me know. We need not follow that other Englishwoman too accurately. Even if I lose this mystery, as I am determined to do, I can depend on my editor to find another. There is, for instance, the mystery why he is my editor. No, you must not think me a rebel; I am far from being that. I do trust to merit

your patronage for the future. Truly, when I think of separation from you, my heart splits up and my head comes ungummed. What is it then that has come between us? Speak, and I will chain up the U. G. And whatever it is I will take it to somebody who is familiar with the methods of producing a Shakespearian cypher, and he will be able to explain it away. For the matter of that, I can do a little in the way of verbal quibbling myself. Then the mists will pass, and on the snow-clad peaks of my pure and exalted devotion will rest once more the rich tints of your love newly arisen.

Oh, picture to yourself the U. G., Uncle N., Arthur, and a keen cross-examining counsel in an unbroken

phalanx, and myself behind them, crying like the Arab women of old, "Sikhim ! Sikhim ! " You would not like it. No, I am wrong ; do not picture that at all. Think rather that you owe me this explanation, and remember therefore that I cannot live in this air of mystery. It stifles me ; I ache—I squirm !

I am your special cut-price article that must be cleared.

Letter XXIV

So I know your mother's reason now at last, and I own that it is final—that is to say, that there is no end to it, and that it works round and round, which may or may not be what “final” means. Without seeing her I am convinced; pray assure her that there will be no necessity for her to call. I will not even point out that in opening your escritoire with a skeleton key and reading my letters to you her conduct was not altogether *la pomme de terre la plus propre*.

She says that, as I consider her a lunatic, she has a fair objection to

the marriage, on the ground of insanity in your family. I have tried to argue it out in vain. The statements in my letters were not always scientifically accurate, and I was always prepared to accept the word "eccentric." Surely, those who can recognise facts correctly and make just deductions from them are eminently sane. If she is correct in accepting the view that she is a lunatic, then she must be sane, and the objection is nullified at once. At least it would be, if one could shut out of one's mind the undoubted fact that nobody who was sane would accept the theory that he was a lunatic. On the other hand, she may be incorrect in accepting the view that she is a lunatic, and this would show a want of

appreciation of facts and of the power of drawing just deductions from them that could only be found in the mentally deranged. But as I have said before, if she is really deranged, then her power to recognise the fact and make a correct deduction from it is conclusive proof that she is nothing of the kind. And in that case we might set our minds at rest, if we could only forget that no sane person would accept a theory of his insanity ; and, as she does this, our worst fears would undoubtedly be realised, were it not that in taking the view that she is a lunatic, she shows a judgment and reasoning power that no lunatic would possess ; and thus the only reason which one could bring forward that

would disprove her sanity would be the fact that she admits her lunacy, which no sane person would dream of doing, though this becomes invalidated when we consider that—oh, my poor head !

It goes round and round. I do not refer to my head, though that is similarly affected, but to the argument. There is no stopping it. It revolves over me, like the wheels of the car of Jugger-something-or-other, and crushes the life out of me. I give in. You say that you can follow her argument ; you have a strong power in you to have done that. You have told me the word I am to say to you : it is your bidding, so I will say it, if you will kindly wait half a minute till I have explained something.

I am well aware that if a man of twenty-eight does not marry in accordance with his mother's directions, she is empowered by English law to take away all his property, with the exception of the clothes he stands up in and one tooth-brush, and to give it to some other little boy. You tell me that if I had not given you up—or, rather, if you had not given me up—she would have done this, and you would have been compelled to accept the only berth at present open to you—that of a waiter at an Italian restaurant at Clapham. I want to say to you that this has had no effect upon me whatever in bringing about my submission. Money, it has been well observed, is dross ; besides, I have some of my own. But (in the

interests of the letters when collected) I think that a stained-glass, renunciatory-martyr style would make a pleasing and pathetic variety. I may as well begin on it at once, for Arthur's friend, Mr. Smith, is coming in to tea this afternoon, and I must get this letter finished first.

So, dearest — for that you must ever be — for the last time, since you will it so, a letter goes from me youward, laden heavily with the honey of my love. That I can suffer so and live, is my greatest wonder : that you may rather enjoy it than not is my deepest prayer. Oh, let me to the end be the worm that never turned, ever faithful and submissive ! And since you command it, I say now that

word of farewell. It comes from one who can never fare well again. Sobs choke my voice, and a blue lime seems to be wobbling all over me. May you be hoppee! Fawh-well!

NOTE. — *All the letters which follow were found lying loosely together on the hall-table. It was fully intended that they should not be forwarded to their destination until after the death of their writer and the man to whom they were written. Unfortunately, they were found by the new housemaid, a lady of conscientious and literal turn of mind, who had been instructed in her last place to post anything that she found on the hall-table. So she posted them, together with the card-salver and a carriage clock. She is at present disengaged.*

Letter XXV

TO-DAY a brown-paper parcel came to me, with twopence to pay on it. Within I found Dr. Pif-bright's *Thoughts on the Epithelium*, an old *Whitaker*, and *An Englishwoman's Love-Letters*. Thus, though no writing accompanies them, I am made sure how final and definite the break is to be, since you thus return the only present that I ever sent you. It is a strange irony: I wanted so much to get rid of those books and to keep you for evermore, but the books are returned and you are lost to me. It reminds one of that

sad song which tells us how the little boy was drowned, but the cat came back. These old *Whitakers* and past *Bradshaws* fight hard for their lives ; they may be thrown into the waste-paper basket in the evening, but they are out and on the table again by morning. They are rather like that other English-woman ; they never seem to know when to go ; they cling.

I would that my blind eyes could see that fault in me which makes even that simple present of the days of our happiness no longer tolerable to you. It is no vanity that makes that blindness. Love cut from me all my pride, and even left me only just enough self-respect to make me brush my teeth at the usual intervals. Grief can-

not put that pride back again. Without questioning, I must know that this is so: that while my whole being is still one psalm of praise to you, you must remove everything that an association with me has made nauseous. Now indeed I will show you how little pride I have, for of all the presents that you gave me I will not return one. Because your dear choice once honoured them, because your hands once handled them, and because as articles of jewelry they have a considerable intrinsic value, I still stick on. And now truly I may cry my "De profundis!" I can get no lower. Still, if some fifty or sixty years hence you come back to me and find me waiting, sitting up and begging as usual,

this at least you shall be able to say of me : that whatever my other sins might be, and whatever your treatment of me might be, I never showed any resentment. No ; I kiss the label on the parcel — kiss it desperately until it comes ungummed, for it is in your own handwriting.

But as I turn afresh to that other Englishwoman, who now more than ever should be my model, I see points of divergence arising. Would you know what they are ? Ask Mr. Smith. I give you at present all the lowliness and desolation that you could wish, but I cannot guarantee their permanence. While they last, I must make the most of them.

I am so tired ! I fancy you would

make anybody feel tired. To-night I can write but little more. (Will your eyes ever fall on that little ?) But this must be said : I do not want to have injured you in any way. I should like to hear you say that they have not hurt you—these few months that I have come into your life. If you have suffered in the least degree through me, I do apologise. I am so sorry ! I do beg pardon for existing ; it was quite unintentional on my part. If you will overlook it this time, it shall not occur again. Is that humble enough ? Ah, what a helpmeet Mr. Uriah Heep missed in me !

Good-bye—the eternal good-bye that tolls deeply the funeral in my heart. Rather pretty that, is n't it ? I 've half a mind to say it again.

Letter XXVI

So I have seen you again, beloved, and my eyes are still burned with the delirious spectacle. It was yesterday, in Oxford Street. I was coming out of the bun-shop, and you were going into the photographer's. It was kind of you not to let your eyes fall on me. Had they done so, I should have opened my mouth wide, jumped into the air, and expired kicking. But it was your back that was towards me, perhaps because you followed the conventional habit of going into the photographer's face first. Above the back was your neck, with the

collar round it, and above the neck your head, surmounted by a hat. Yes, that was the first thought that came to me : I had passed out of your life, and yet it had not altered the order of your being ! There was the neck above the back, and the hat above the head, just as when I first saw you and my life began. It did not vex me—in fact it takes a good deal to vex me. But if your hat had come just between your neck and your head, or your head had come just between your neck and your back, it would have been a kind of consolation ; it would have shown that the upheaval was as tremendous in its effects with you as it has been with me. Even if you had just worn your collar round your back, it

would have been a sign that you had really altered. Oh, let me not be selfish in my love ! I would not have you different. Only some sympathy in suffering would have meant so much to me.

And indeed in the moment that I saw you I realised that some change there had been. You are at least two inches taller—I think it improves you, if anything could improve perfection. Your back is more bent, as if you too had felt the weight of tragedy. My greatest grief is that I cannot come and comfort you for the loss of me, and—sadder still—the fact that if I could, the comfort would not be needed.

I hear that you have been ill, that you have had the measles.

Arthur brings me any word of you that may happen to be about ; none could be dearer or kinder than he. You must be better since I saw you to-day. For that I am thankful. I do hope that it was not grief for me that gave you those measles ; a sixpenny handbook on domestic medicine that I have consulted does not mention grief as a direct cause of this particular complaint. How gladly would I have had some or all of those measles instead of you ! But as usual I have no complaint.

Nobody knows—I think nobody knows. I always try to be cheerful. I seldom burst from the room in a flood of tears, push the plate away untasted, clutch the chair-back, wear deep mourning, or threaten suicide ; and never when

Mr. Smith is here. I do not wish any one of my dear ones to be downcast because of me. What a perfect angel you have missed! Of you I can have no hard thought. Who could be kinder or nobler than you have shown yourself to be? (I must discuss this problem with Mr. Smith.) Oh, let me for ever kiss the hand that strikes, the boot that kicks! It is not very much to ask, but it is denied me. Fate screams its inexorable "Outside only!" at me. To-day, for the last time, I have seen you. The picture lies for ever graven on the copper of my heart, bitten in, permanent. Above you was the simple announcement that the terms were strictly cash. In the window at the side was a crayon enlarge-

ment of a fat baby, with a glazed and drunken expression, sitting on a plush cushion. One moment and the door swung, and your dear back had passed from my view. The baby still stared drunkenly ; the notice still insisted that one had to pay at the time of the sitting ; in the streets the traffic went on relentlessly. But for me the gas was turned off, and the lights were out : you had gone ! Had you known that I was so near, would you have turned ? You would have seen one whom sorrow has greatly changed, like some wan and patient martyr in a stained-glass window, with the exception of the modern costume and a string-bag full of parcels. I shall never know. I can only take my sorrow into my own

room and write it out carefully, and all in vain, since no eye but my own will ever see it. Oh, my beloved, if you should ever find that this barrier which has come between us is no longer effective to keep us apart, be sure to let me know. A post-card will receive prompt attention.

Postscripts, as I have observed before, I never do write, but Arthur has just told me that you were not in London yesterday. So it must have been some other man that I saw going into the photographer's. Silly mistake of mine! Strictly speaking, I suppose I ought to write this letter all over again.

Letter XXVII

BELOVED : The thought keeps troubling me that I have not yet sent you a full account of my early childhood. For this, at least two reasons may be found—that you do not want it, and that I (since my memory is notoriously weak) cannot give it. Indeed, one infantile recollection that I sent to you still weighs heavily on my conscience. But I have a good precedent (at five shillings) for believing that when a man shows himself quite uninterested in a woman's future, her correct course is to provide him with details as to her past. I will

not say that the argument is absolutely clear to me, but still precedent (at five shillings) is precedent, and must not be neglected. So let brisk imagination wait on halting memory, and let me not stay out of anything. Reminiscences of early childhood?—why, certainly. This way, please, and kindly mind the step.

I think my earliest recollection is of my second month. I did not actually begin a diary until I was three months old, and that fixes the date with sufficient precision of my antecedent reminiscences. One sunny day I was conscious that I was being taken by my nurse to some local form of entertainment. It was light in character and serious in purpose—amateur

Christy Minstrels on behalf of the Church Restoration Fund. I heard one man with a blackened face ask another, similarly afflicted, why a miller wore a white hat. I was, undoubtedly, young, but I was tired to desperation of that riddle already. I hurled my feeding-bottle with deadly precision in the face of the curate from the next parish, who had come over to help, and had put that senile question. At the same time I raised screams which were successful in closing the entertainment and emptying the hall. Now that it is too late, that misdoing weighs heavily upon my mind. The riddle had certainly great age, but it is possible that the curate had found a new answer. I shall never know now.

It must have been some days after this that an aunt put me down on the carpet, and told me to crawl to the other side of the room and open the door of a certain cupboard. I told her to state her terms and she should have a reply by return of post. She said she was prepared to offer the very special inducement that, if I did open the cupboard, I should find in it something to my advantage. This being so, I crawled half-way across the floor, and then, suspecting a police trap, crawled back again. My aunt spanked me, and that saddened me at the time. What saddens me now is that I did not know, and now never shall know, what was waiting for me in that cupboard. This problem, beloved, still keeps me awake on

those few occasions when the memory of you would have permitted me to sleep. Perhaps in that darksome cupboard that something to my advantage still waits with hands outstretched. I can sympathise, with depth and bitterness, with that waiting attitude : I have been there myself.

On referring to my notes made at the time, I find that the arrival of Arthur in this world of sin considerably upset me. I was not jealous at all, that has never been my fault. The trouble was, that I did not understand the purpose for which Arthur had been intended. I believe that trouble is by no means uncommon in nurseries. A manual containing plain directions, and entitled *Baby Brothers, and How to Work*

Them, would, I think, command a ready sale. At the age of one year and a half I remember enquiring for something of the kind at Mudie's, and being put off with an illustrated *Hans Andersen*. The consequences to Arthur might have been serious. For some few weeks I generally used him to throw over the bannisters, to attract the attention of anyone to whom I wished to speak in the hall below. Sometimes the people in the hall caught him, and sometimes they did not ; on one or two occasions he was a good deal chipped, and I believe some fault was found with me for what was after all a sin of ignorance. With what hideous injustice children are treated ! It only once occurred to me to regard him as fuel,

and to attempt to put him on the fire, and then I was checked. Children are far too often checked, I think ; it spoils free development. A child is generally amenable to argument. As soon as my nurse pointed out that Arthur was my brother, and that I loved him, and that it would be a pity to break him, I replied : " Quite so ; but why could n't you have said that before ? "

What grief that my childhood was never linked with yours ! We might have gathered violets together, and anything else that was not nailed to the floor. Your mother would have had time to familiarise herself slowly with an idea which she is at present unable to welcome. But you went your

way and I mine. You became a “rorty young dog”—I wonder how does one rort?—and I became a perfect angel, with well-marked literary proclivities. Perhaps our loss is the public’s eternal gain. Poor public ! It would have had another three letters and heard all about it. I doubt even if three letters would have been enough.

As it is, I have been able to stew my childhood down into the compass of one short letter. I have not given you all or nearly all. But it may be that then, as in later life, a little of me will content you. Farewell : From my heart I say it.

Letter XXVIII

So your dear mother is no longer with you ! I had always thought it possible that one day she would lose her temper with some man and marry him, and now it has come to pass. You 've already had the measles, and now you are going to have a new papa ; so many things crowd into a man's life to make up for all that he loses ! It may have been her approaching marriage or your illness that had softened her, for it was at that time that she sent me a bundle of early rhubarb and a card of condolence. It was wicked and bitter of me to send them both back

again. But as full compensation for injuries received, they seemed to me a little inadequate, and besides, I never did like rhubarb. It is too late now to tell her that I am sorry. Yet let me record it here. I hope that she will be happy, and that the local curate will be happy with her. Had she married a man of wild and imperious nature, she would have taught him to sham dead, draw water from a well, and pick out any card selected by the audience, at the word of command, in about three weeks. What will happen now that she has married a man who is fairly tame already? I do not think he will live very long. Still, I do hope they will be happy. I hope you will be happy. I hope everybody will be happy except

myself. Never mind me, I can die. It's of no consequence.

Last night you came into my dreams. We were in a large omnibus with several other people. You had a hammer and tacks, and were fastening everybody's clothes down to the seats with the tacks. I asked why, and you said it was to prevent fraud. Just then a very red-faced conductor looked in and said that he was at home on the first and third Tuesdays, and you threw the hammer in his face, and the omnibus blew up, and I woke. It seems a little hard that when one does dream of one's dearest, from whom one is parted for ever, it should be a silly sort of dream like that. I would much sooner have had something with an angel and a

sunset in it. Fortunately, I am quite used now to never having anything I want. It does not matter in the least. Nothing matters. When I am dead I shall be very much less in the way.

Why, there's Mr. Smith coming down the drive, and my hair's all like this, and I'm not dressed! I've no time to write another word, I must rush.

Letter XXIX

EVERY day I am giving myself a little more pain than I need—for the sake of you. I am giving myself my own letters to read again, day by day, as I wrote them: I kept copies of course, for the Uncle Grandmother insisted upon it in view of contingencies which might arise. I take one a day, every morning before breakfast or as required, like any other kind of pill. I cannot see how it will benefit me, and I am positively sure that it cannot benefit you, and the only difference that it makes to anyone else is that I cry steadily through

breakfast, and the U. G. thinks that I am going into a decline. But I keep on with it. It was Mr. Smith who suggested it; the more I see of Mr. Smith, the more I am convinced that he knows his way about without a map. I limit myself to one a morning, because I am far from strong; my own inclination is to get through them as quickly as possible and then burn them, or, as an alternative course, to burn them first.

They never make me angry with you, those letters; but they do frequently make me angry with myself. I think all good women are by nature economical, and regret anything in the way of absolute waste. I would not (not just yet) criticise you in any way, but I

cannot help thinking that your little wants might have been supplied much cheaper. I have paid too much, and it is additionally galling to think that the goods have not been delivered. Inexorable justice calls to me that I must not grumble if you took me at precisely my own valuation—half nothing, with a liberal discount for cash. I suppose you would have thrown me over just the same, even if I had not so frequently implied that the honour of cleaning your boots would alone make me feel dizzy. And if I had been a shade less profuse and ebullient, I might have had some fragments of self-respect still left. They would have been useful to me. I can imagine circumstances under which they might blossom once

more. I will not say more than that—not just yet.

Your letters I have never read again, and if anybody tells you that I have made elaborate arrangements to have them buried with me when I die, don't you believe it. I have grown rather tired of that other Englishwoman, and do not want to follow her much further. The last of your letters, if you want to know, went into the greenhouse furnace last night. Mr. Smith helped.

I am not going to say any more to-night, because the person that I am angry with happens to be myself. But I have the feeling that there may be more to say soon—very soon.

Letter XXX

DEAR MR. — : A secret that will be no secret soon : before I am done with this year I shall be Mrs. Smith. This will be a disappointment to you.

It would undoubtedly have been a greater compliment to you if I had decided to die. On my death-bed I should have sent Arthur to you, and he would have brought back word that you, like that cur that the other Englishwoman was so fond of, sent your "kind regards," or some other equally suitable message. I have the feeling that in your heart of hearts you

would have enjoyed this more. You would have gone bleating about it to all the men you know, with a poor assumption of sorrow, and a still poorer dissimulation of vanity. That is what the other cur did when the other Englishwoman died; I think I can swear to that. But you will have to do without it, even at the risk of depriving my last letter of the most stereotyped form of pathos.

In deciding not to pay you the graceful compliment of a despairing death, I have been influenced chiefly by the facts that my health is fortunately good, and that I have every motive and desire to live. Also, I have grown rather tired of the door-mat attitude. I am glad that the man that I am going to

marry does not, since he happens to be a man, wish me to degrade myself and my sex in every word that I say and every line that I write.

Pray do not reproach yourself. I feel that this advice is not needed, and that nothing could possibly spoil your self-content. You will have your little story about the poor girl who fell madly in love with you, and finally married another man from pique : I can hear those stories now. But again I say, do not reproach yourself. I think it must have been obvious to you for some time past that if Mr. Smith wished to marry me, you and your mother and everything that is yours would be passed out. Had I met him sooner, your mother would have

been spared much trouble. Also, though it is true that you have throughout shown less chivalry than a dead fish might, I do not wish you to reproach yourself for that either. Two wrongs do not make a right, but it must be a comfort to you to feel that you lose nothing by contrast. On the contrary, I have shown myself just the woman for a manikin of that type. And for that you might expect me to reproach myself, but I do not, and I will tell you why. For this great reason why I do not reproach myself is also your best reason for not reproaching yourself either.

Briefly, we are not real. We are only a lot of rubbish that the editor has made up. In that, perhaps, lies our last and closest resemblance

to the other Englishwoman and the insufferable bounder who sent her his "remembrances" on her death-bed. They are better made up and better edited, but that is all. They are not real either. If it is found their creation has soothed the vanity of a man of imagination, I shall not be surprised.

But to realise one's unreality is deadly. It makes one feel that one cannot possibly go on. Now I cannot longer hold together, but my love for you is the first part of me that—thank goodness!—has given out. The rest follows. I fade

slowly

away.

I'm almost

. . .

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